

Iraqi cities and move into an overwatch role. After this transition has occurred, the draw-down of American forces will continue to the second stage, with all U.S. forces returning home from Iraq by the end of 2011.

As we enter this new phase in America's relations with Iraq, we have an opportunity to adopt a new perspective here at home. There were legitimate differences of opinion about the initial decision to remove Saddam Hussein and the subsequent conduct of the war. But now the surge and the courage of brave Iraqis have turned the situation around. And Americans should be able to agree that it is in our Nation's strategic and moral interests to support the free and democratic Iraq that is emerging in the heart of the Middle East.

The American people have sacrificed a great deal to reach this moment. The battle in Iraq has required a large amount of time and a large amount of money. Our men and women in uniform have carried out difficult and dangerous missions and endured long separations from friends and family. And thousands of our finest citizens have given their lives to make our country safer and bring us to this new day. The war in Iraq is not yet over. But thanks to these agreements and the courage of our men and women in Iraq, it is decisively on its way to being won.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 6:50 a.m. on December 5 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 6. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 5 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at the Union League of Philadelphia's Unveiling of the President's Portrait in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

December 6, 2008

Good morning. Welcome to my hanging. [Laughter] Thank you for coming, and thank you for your warm welcome.

First, I'd like to compliment Mark Carder. He did a really fine job with a challenging subject. [Laughter] I was taken aback by how much gray paint you had to use—[laughter]—which speaks more about my job than yours. [Laughter] But thanks a lot. It's been a joy to work with you, and I'm confident this portrait will stand the test of time.

I want to thank Fred and Frank for welcoming me here. I thank you for the medal. I'm keeping pretty good company, which I will speak about in a minute.

First of all, I do want to thank the board of directors of the Union League for taking time out of your Saturday to be here. And I appreciate all the guests who have come as well.

I particularly want to say thanks to my friend Arlen Specter for joining us, and he—[applause]. It's been a joy working with you—most of the time. [Laughter] He's a pretty independent-minded fellow—[laughter]—who is honest and decent. And like me, he married very well. So Joan, thanks for being here, and I appreciate you supporting this good man during some very difficult times.

I thank the Hoopers for paying for this work. I thank Jim Straw and the Abraham Lincoln Foundation and the foundation members who are here today. I appreciate you preserving the legacy of a good man.

I am—it turns out, this award had been given to folks I have had the honor of serving with: Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense Don Rumsfeld, Secretary Tom Ridge—three good men who are dedicated and patriot public servants.

I'm especially proud to be a co-recipient with a guy I call 41, the 1987 Gold Medal Award winner, the guy I call dad; you call him President Bush. We owe our achievements to the same savvy political counselor and firm disciplinarian: Barbara. [Laughter] And they're both doing well, by the way. Mother is coming out of the hospital. I hope they don't put this on TV, but she's a tough old bird—[laughter]—whose spirits are soaring high.

The motto of the Union League is "Love of Country Leads." You obviously love our country, because you continue to lead in ways

that make Philadelphia a more compassionate place, and I want to thank you for that. I appreciate the fact that you have mentoring programs and internships and scholarships, that basically says the dream is for all who live in this country. I thank you for your efforts to preserve historical treasures. One can learn a lot from the past, and the Union League is doing its part to tell the true story of our great Nation.

In short, I thank you for your service to your community and our country.

I also thank you for preserving the legacy of Abraham Lincoln. I'm about to be a member of the ex-President's club, so I'll just call him Abe. *[Laughter]* If he were around I could say, "You call me W." *[Laughter]* He—I don't know if you know this or not, but there's a place in the Oval Office where the President puts the most influential President—portrait of, I guess you'd say, influential President. I'm somewhat conflicted about the influential President, so I say, 41's portrait hangs in my heart; 16 hangs on the wall.

I found it interesting that the League was founded in 1862 to support President Lincoln in a time when his leadership was deeply controversial. *[Laughter]* Look, I know how he felt. *[Laughter]*

But the principles on which he stood have stood the test of time. "All men are created equal under God," he said unflinchingly throughout his Presidency. Liberty is given to every man, woman, and child on the face of the Earth. I believe, like Lincoln, there is an Almighty, and a gift of that Almighty to every man is freedom. He has taught Presidents that you must act on your principles and make tough decisions, regardless of the political consequences.

I have been a—I have drawn strength from his example. I have learned lessons by reading about Abraham Lincoln. And I want to thank you for preserving his legacy.

And most importantly, I thank you for your kind words and your heartfelt prayers during the last 8 years. It has been—somebody said, "What's it's like to be President?" I said, "Some days you're happy; some days not so happy; every day joyous to serve the United States."

God bless you, and God bless our country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:38 a.m. in Lincoln Hall at the Union League of Philadelphia. In his remarks, he referred to painter Mark Carder; Frederick C. Haab, Jr., president, Union League of Philadelphia; Frank Giordano, member, and James B. Straw, chairman, board of trustees, Abraham Lincoln Foundation; and Bruce and Eileen Hooper, commissioners of the President's portrait.

Interview With Sam Ryan of CBS Sports in Philadelphia

December 6, 2008

Army-Navy Football Game

Mr. Ryan. Mr. President, we know this is one of the most storied rivalries in all of sports. What does the Army-Navy game mean to you?

The President. Well, it means to me that I have—I got a chance to come and be with people who will be joining the finest military in the history of the world.

Members of the U.S. Armed Forces

Mr. Ryan. When you look at these young players and the seniors, and you know that they enrolled in the academies after 9/11, what does that say about them?

The President. I stand in awe of somebody who would volunteer to serve America in a time of danger. It says that we are blessed to have people of such character in our country.

The Presidency

Mr. Ryan. Mr. President, I know you're probably doing a lot of reflecting here on December 6th. What will you miss the most about being President?

The President. I will miss a lot of things. But one of the things I have treasured the most is to be the Commander in Chief of men and women of courage and character and decency.

Mr. Ryan. Thank you, Mr. President.

NOTE: The interview began at 12:11 p.m. at Lincoln Financial Field. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.